

A Forrester Consulting  
Thought Leadership Paper  
Commissioned By Hyland  
March 2021

# Prepare For The Next Business Stress-Test With Content Services



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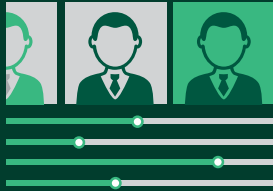
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In the last year, an even greater proportion of decision-makers cited experience improvements as a content management strategy driver.



Decision-makers whose organizations have faced little or no pandemic disruption are twice as likely to be making content services a “top” priority.

## Executive Summary

A long period of physical distancing brought on by a disruptive global pandemic has heightened consumers’ and employees’ need to communicate, transact, and work digitally. While a vaccine will slowly usher in some normalcy, organizational strategies, including those for content management and content-centric processes, will be forever altered. To succeed, organizations must elevate their content management practices now to satisfy the growing desire to engage in more innovative, reliable, efficient, and flexible ways.

Hyland commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate the state of organizations’ content management strategies, as well as the role modern content services can play in advancing digital objectives and enhancing the experience of customers and employees. In our third annual study of content management strategies, we found that while a growing number of decision-makers appreciate content services’ strategic value — and leading organizations are faring better in today’s disruptive environment — its full potential remains largely untapped for many.

### KEY FINDINGS

- › **Experience improvements are driving content management strategies.** Forrester’s own research has found that the top objectives for content management coalesce around experience improvements.<sup>1</sup> Our study validates this: Customer and employee experience (CX and EX, respectively) improvements not only appear among the top objectives driving strategies, but also have had the greatest lift in the last year. Decision-makers associate content services with powering several CX and EX benefits, including providing customers with more personalized experiences and employees with easier ways to use content as an insight source.
- › **Confidence in the status quo has fallen.** The need to quickly adjust to a larger remote workforce and serve customers in entirely new ways has exposed cracks within content-centric tools and processes. A shrinking minority feel confident in their organizations’ ability to support critical content functions, including those related to sharing, searching for, and collaborating on content with various stakeholders. At the same time, fewer than half consider their digital transformation efforts to be very successful — representing a 10-point drop in confidence in the last year. Decision-makers now see a need to strengthen content management and digital capabilities that felt “good enough” pre-pandemic.
- › **Content services enable decision-makers to reclaim their confidence and future-proof their operations.** Our study has consistently found that those who embrace content services are better positioned to realize digital, CX, and EX goals. This year, we also observed that an effective content services strategy can insulate an organization from significant disruption and allow it to bounce back from any disruption more effectively. These benefits were most pronounced among organizations that build their content services practices on four pillars: agile adaptivity, intelligent automation, tailored solutions, and reimagined business models/processes.

# Disruption Is Causing Organizations To Examine Their Content And Processes In A New Light

The 2020s' tumultuous start — characterized by instability in the form of social and political unrest, climate-related disasters, and a deadly pandemic — has forced organizations, and their content management processes, to adapt to a “new normal” as traditional tactics face obsolescence and the threat to business stability becomes real. Since our study began three years ago, we have observed a steady mind shift about content and content-centric processes among decision-makers. From simply addressing back-office goals related to compliance and storage, content management's value has expanded to address strategic objectives like serving customers with differentiated experiences and promoting employee productivity. This trend has continued in this year's findings. More than ever, organizations need flexible, reliable, and secure content access to engage with internal and external stakeholders.

However, a shrinking minority say their content processes align with this vision. Critical processes — including external content sharing and maintaining security/privacy standards — are even more likely to feel challenging (see Figure 1). The pandemic has played a large role in this confidence decline. Just 16% report facing no pandemic disruption. For the rest, this event upended day-to-day operations due to (see Figure 2):

- **An immediate shift to remote work.** Virtually overnight, organizations scrambled to offer content access to a majority-remote workforce. Challenges finding critical information hidden in information silos (30%) and difficulty accessing internal systems or storage by remote workers (26%) meant employees wasted valuable time looking for needed information (38%).
- **An increase in content management complexity.** As users went remote, the volume and diversity of data being shared grew considerably, and so did the security concerns. Some lacked coordinated governance (32%) while others struggled to wrangle numerous content management systems or partners (32%), resulting in uneven content distribution and protections.
- **A collapse of paper-based processes.** Processes that are critical to day-to-day operations but assume that workers and files are in the same place crumble when most or all employees are working from home.<sup>2</sup> Paper-reliant or highly manual processes — which up to now organizations had deferred digitizing — “broke,” causing headaches for decision-makers who struggled to migrate their content (30%) and integrate it with newer systems (32%).
- **A loss of resources and expertise.** Revenue declines and economic uncertainty have put pressure on budgets: Nearly a third report a lack of budget as an obstacle to leveraging their content effectively. Resource spending that was once easy to approve is now subject to greater scrutiny. In addition, some organizations made the difficult decision to downsize their workforces. As departing employees took their expertise with them, fewer skilled people are left to shoulder responsibilities (30% cite an expertise deficit).

Figure 1

“How much do you agree with the following statements about your organization's content?”  
(Showing “Strongly agree”)

December 2019

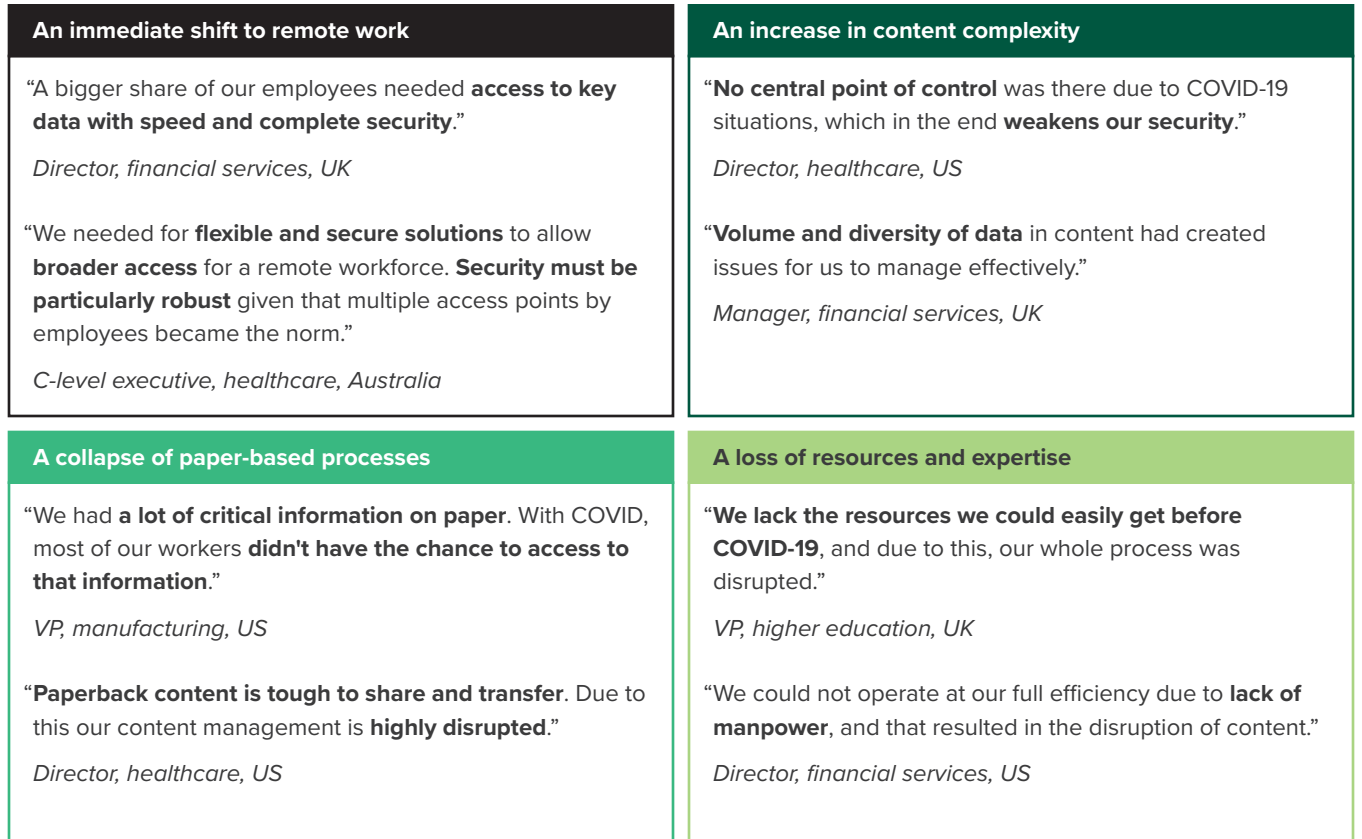
December 2020

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 35% | “Content is consistently delivered across our customer's lifecycle.”   |
| 33% |  |
| 41% | “It is easy to share content and collaborate on updates with our trusted external stakeholders.”   |
| 29% |  |
| 34% | “We exceed our obligations to create, secure, store, and dispose of content in line with the laws and regulations that pertain to our business.” |
| 28% |  |
| 33% | “We can easily search for content across multiple locations and repositories.”   |
| 26% |  |
| 26% | “Our employees never waste time searching for or recreating content.”  |
| 24% |  |

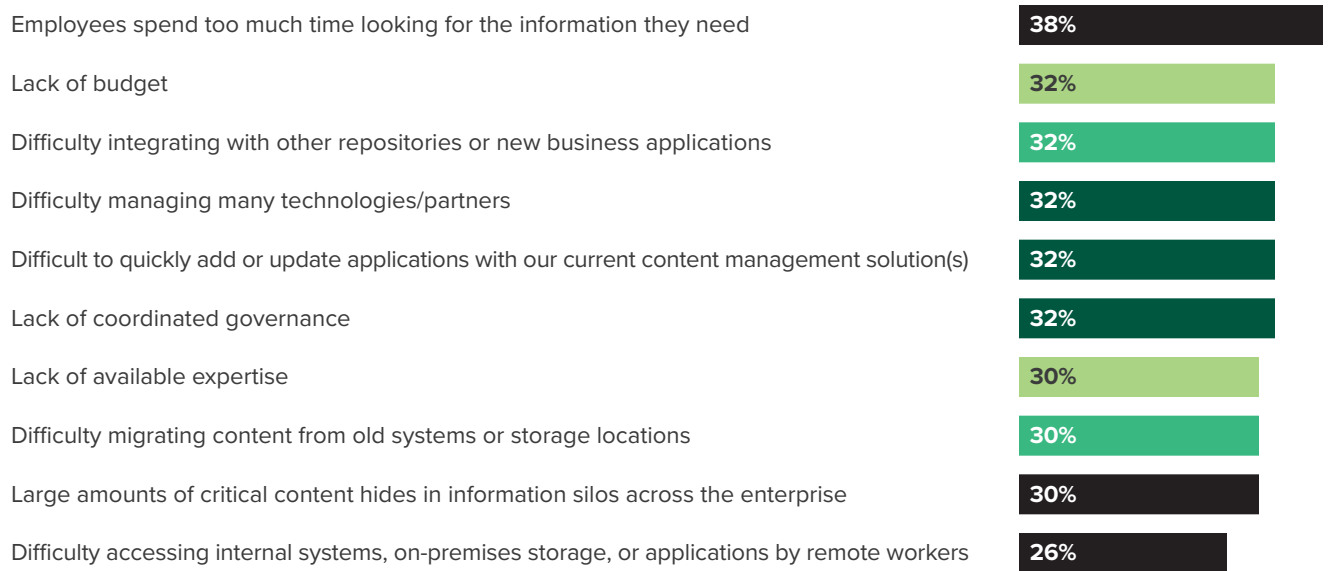
Base: 407 global content management decision-makers  
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Hyland, December 2020

Figure 2

Four Factors Have Made Managing Content During The Pandemic Especially Difficult:



“Which of the following, if any, are obstacles to leveraging your organization’s content to drive decisions and strategy?”  
(Select all that apply)



Base: 256 global content management decision-makers who are facing disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic  
 Note: Emphasis to quotes added  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Hyland, December 2020

## PANDEMIC DISRUPTION IS ACCELERATING DIGITAL AMBITIONS

Given the challenges they are grappling with, it's no surprise that decision-makers are more critical of their digital transformation efforts than they were just one year ago (48% rate their digital transformation as “very” or “extremely” successful this year, representing a 10-point drop.)

Many have responded by doubling down on the priority they're placing on their digital initiatives. On average, about 50% or more have already completely or significantly evolved their content management strategies to account for various trends in the market (see Figure 3). While some organizations have had to make tradeoffs between the digital initiatives they can prioritize, over a third are accelerating mobile, agile development, AI, and automation aspects of their content management strategies specifically due to the pandemic and other disruptive events they've recently experienced. Acceleration is greatest for cloud computing and digitization of business processes. Cloud-based apps and services are better-suited to serve distributed and remote workforces and ease information exchange among both internal and external stakeholders. Digitization of essential processes, while historically a top driver for content management investment, becomes even more important as organizations seek to eliminate any lingering paper dependencies.

“[COVID-19] **expedited** certain processes for future development of **AI and automation** in order to facilitate remote communications related to post COVID-19 reality.

*Manager, healthcare, US  
(emphasis added)*



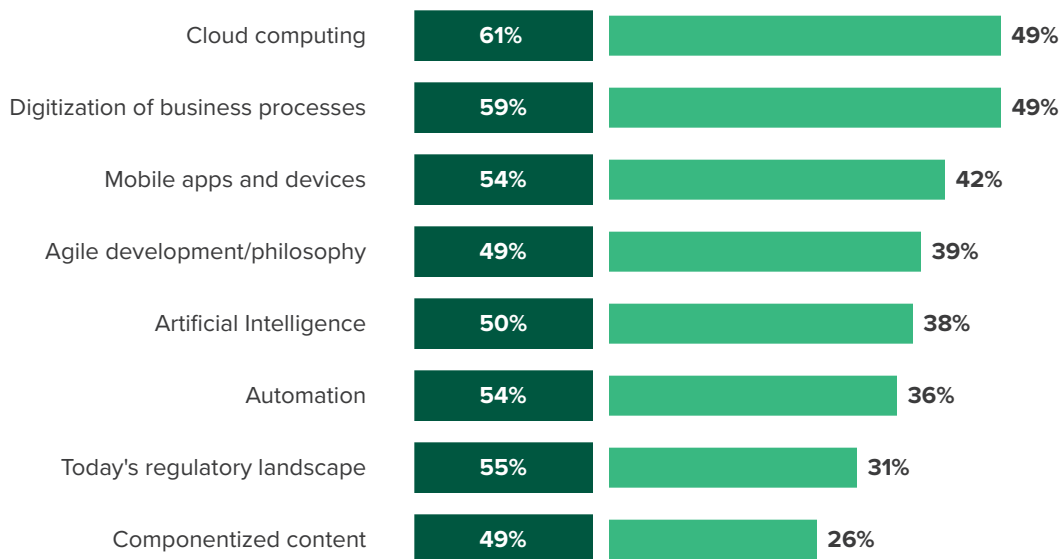
“[COVID-19] has **accelerated and, in some cases, initiated digital transformation** and the move to **cloud-based services.**”

*Director, healthcare, UK  
(emphasis added)*



**Figure 3**

■ Percent who have **completely or significantly** evolved their content management approaches due to each trend  
 ■ Percent who have **accelerated** their efforts due to recent disruptive events (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, social unrest)



Base: 407 global content management decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Hyland, December 2020

## THE PANDEMIC WILL CONTINUE TO SHAPE CONTENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES EVEN AFTER IT HAS BEEN CONTAINED

While the crisis will eventually wane, its impact on content management strategies and content-related processes will continue to be felt long after it has subsided. While more decision-makers cite budget constraints this year relative to last, most will maintain or increase their investment in modernizing their content management practices over the next two years (see Figure 4). In fact, about half intend to grow their content management budgets in this period. Fifty-three percent plan to increase their investment in cloud content platforms, and 45% will do the same for their mobile and employee productivity capabilities.

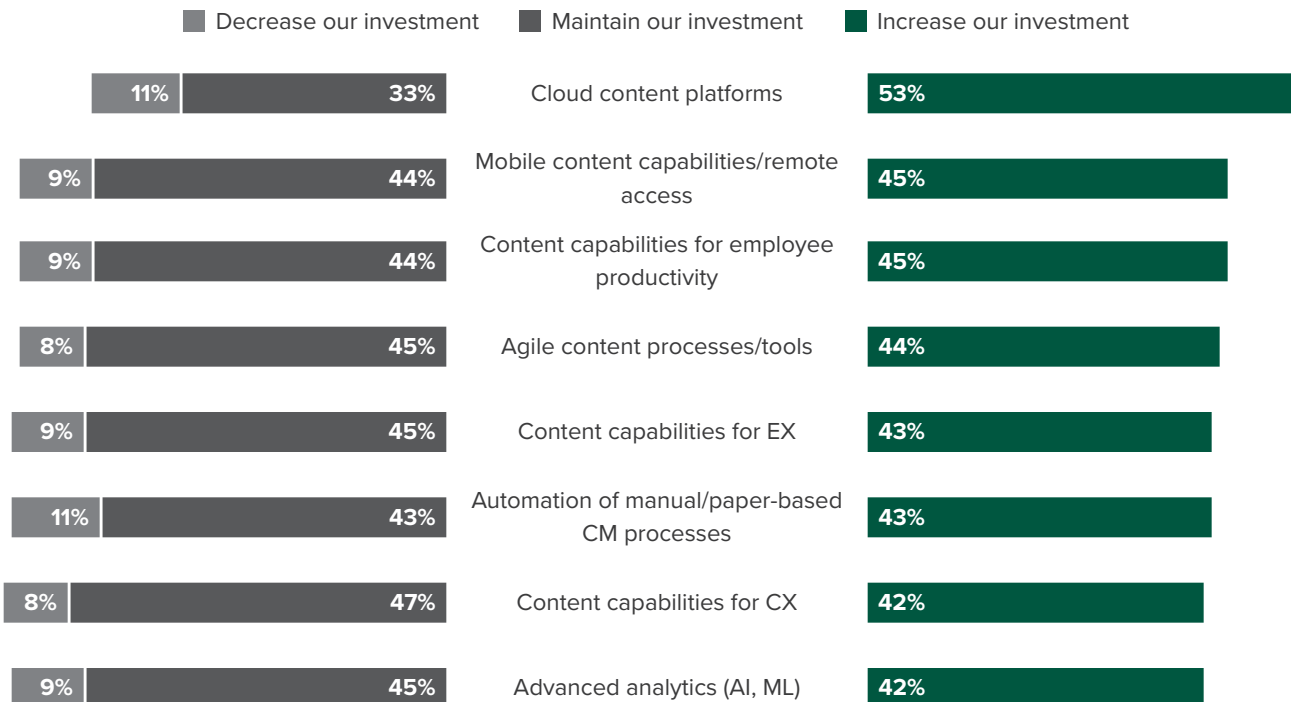
Investing in future-proofing their content processes in this way is a wise choice. Forrester predicts that the “roaring 2020s” will be dominated by systemic risks related to disease outbreaks, political instability, and climate change-related disasters as our global society becomes increasingly interconnected.<sup>3</sup> As the immediate crisis fades, an opportunity emerges to design a content management strategy that can respond to emerging business needs as the standard operating mode, not just as crisis-response.<sup>4</sup>



49% intend to increase their content management budgets over the next 12 to 24 months.

Figure 4

“Thinking about your content management strategy today and any lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on your strategy in the future, how do you expect your investment in the following content areas to change over the next 12 to 24 months?” (Showing top options for “Increase our investment”)



Base: 407 global content management decision-makers

Note: Not showing “Don’t know” responses

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Hyland, December 2020

# Modern Business Strategies Need Modern Content Services

Today’s environment requires technology that is “future-fit” — rooted in customer obsession and capable of an unprecedented level of adaptivity, creativity, and resilience.<sup>5</sup> Content services, which 64% are making a “high” or “top” priority, fit this bill. Content services are granular capabilities and APIs, often delivered in a flexible software platform, allowing developers and designers to create document- or process-rich content applications. Modern content platforms continue to displace and extend the monolithic enterprise content management (ECM) suites of the past two decades, particularly as demand for cloud-friendly platforms grows.<sup>6</sup> As they did 12 months ago, decision-makers continue to see content services as a vehicle to modernize their content practices and advance digital goals, especially those related to cloud services, data and analytics, collaboration, security, agile development, and AI (see Figure 5).

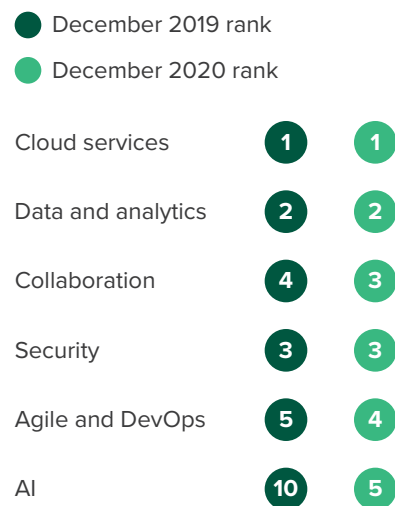
## CONTENT SERVICES SUPPORT CX, EX, AND RESILIENCY

The pandemic has only grown consumers’ digital adoption and employees’ expectations for employer technologies. Forrester has found that the top objectives for content management are coalescing around experience improvements.<sup>7</sup> Our study validates this: CX and EX not only appear among the top objectives driving strategies, but also have had the greatest lift in the last year.<sup>8</sup>

Content services can support these objectives. Decision-makers are even more likely to cite CX and EX improvements as a content services benefit realized or expected.<sup>9</sup> Notably, over 50% believe content services can improve their ability to manage customer inquiries and provide more personalized customer experiences. Over 50% also say that with content services, employees can more easily use content as a source of data for insight, and processes for creating, securing, storing, or disposing of content in line with laws/regulations can be streamlined (see Figure 6). Finally, respondents who have prioritized content services benefit from greater resiliency. Those who have thus far faced little or no pandemic disruption are twice as likely to be making content services a “top” priority.

**Figure 5**

### Top Digital Transformation Initiatives Decision-Makers Believe Content Services Can Significantly Enable Or Support



Base: 407 global content management decision-makers  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Hyland, December 2020

**Figure 6**

#### Top CX Benefit Areas

- 56%** Improved handling of inquiries
- 53%** More personalized experiences
- 49%** Faster correction of errors
- 47%** Faster processing of claims or statements
- 45%** More efficient distribution or marketing, sales, or technical support materials

#### Top EX Benefit Areas

- 53%** Greater ease in using content as a source of data for insight
- 52%** More streamlined processes for creating, securing, storing, or disposing of content in line with laws/regulations
- 49%** Faster processing of approvals
- 48%** Improved ability to find needed content/information
- 47%** Improved visibility and understanding of customer’s journey

Base: Variable; global content management decision-makers  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Hyland, December 2020



# Four Competency Pillars Continue To Augment Content Services Efforts

Our study has consistently found that a content service platform's true potential is unlocked when strategies are built on four key pillars:

- 1. Agile adaptivity.** Technology that is agile by design and provides the organization with greater freedom to respond and adjust processes to meet evolving customer demands and business needs.
- 2. Intelligent automation.** Built-in logic, robust workflow, and learning abilities to anticipate user/customer needs and enable smarter processes, equipping the organization to be more productive and efficient.
- 3. Tailored solutions.** Solutions built on a foundation of deep customer, process, and industry experience.
- 4. Reimagined business models/processes.** Applying technology to enable new types of offerings, products, and processes.

However, thanks in large part to the COVID-19 stress test, fewer believe their organizations are executing well on the capabilities that underpin these four pillars, when compared to how they felt a year ago. Notably, only about half or fewer say the following describe their firms' content processes very well, representing a drop of at least 15 points for each:

- > "We actively use data for insights into how we offer new products and services."
- > "We have access to a broad range of functionality in our content solutions to address a range of needs."
- > "We have interoperability across multiple content platforms."
- > "We rapidly deploy new applications to address changing needs."

Even in this turbulent time when decision-makers' confidence is shaken, a segment of leading organizations continues to set itself apart (see Figure 7). Eighty percent of these "leaders" (those whose firms have adopted content services and report above-average performance against the four pillars) describe their digital transformation strategies as successful, representing a 19-point delta over followers (content services users who don't have above-average scores in all four areas) and a 41-point delta over laggards (those who have not yet adopted content services). And while, on average, fewer than half of followers or laggards exceed the expectations of their customers or employees at least occasionally, over 70% of leaders do. Finally, leaders are not only less likely to report severe pandemic disruption (21% of leaders report moderate or significant disruption, relative to 38% of followers and 36% of laggards), they're also more likely to rate their ability to respond to any disruption favorably.

Figure 7

### Defining Content Services Maturity

Respondents rated their organizations on a 1-to-5 scale according to their ability to execute on 16 subcapabilities associated with four competency pillars (four statements each for agile adaptivity, intelligent automation, tailored solutions, and reimagined business models/processes). Ratings for each pillar were aggregated into an average score. The most mature organizations, those with above-average scores across all four pillars, were defined as “leaders.”

■ **Content services leaders (N = 54)**

Have already adopted content services and have above-average scores across all four pillars

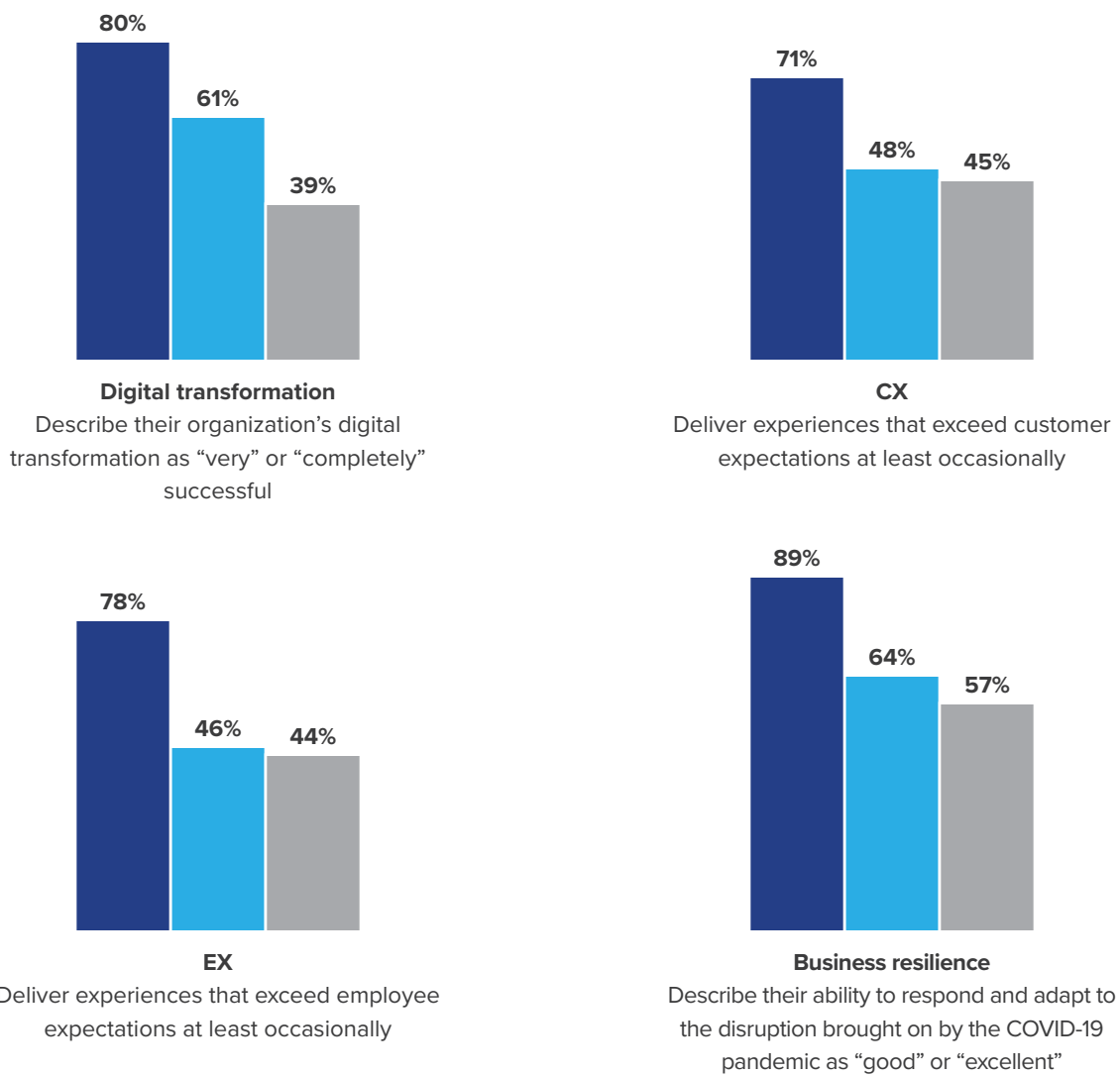
■ **Content services followers (N = 76)**

Have already adopted content services but do not have above-average scores across all four pillars

■ **Content services laggards (N = 277)**

Have not yet adopted content services

### RESULTS BY MATURITY GROUP



Base: Variable; global content management decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Hyland, December 2020

# In The Future, Cloud, AI, And External Partners Will Only Grow In Importance

Organizations that are still maturing can learn from leader organizations that are at the forefront of content management modernization. In addition to content services, leaders are more likely to be embracing three areas that are essential to future-fit content strategies (see Figure 8):

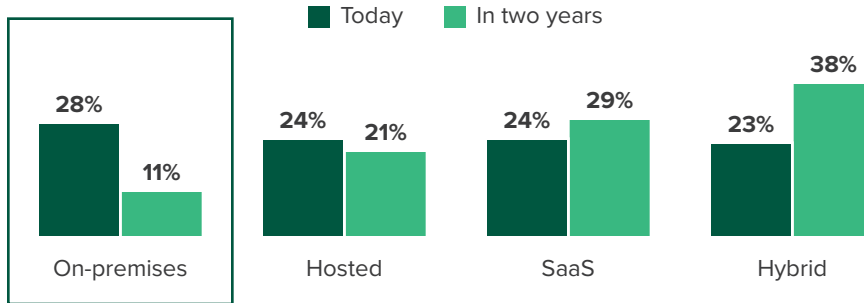
- › **Cloud computing.** A cloud foundation provides scale and adaptivity, as well as continuous vendor-delivered innovation.<sup>10</sup> Cloud computing has been growing in importance, and adoption will only increase as the pressure to serve remote workers intensifies.<sup>11</sup> While the road to cloud remains varied today, respondents predict a steep decline in their use of on-premises content deployments in favor of cloud-based options over the next two years. While laggards are most likely to depend primarily on on-prem deployments today, leaders are more likely to have already made the cloud transition.
- › **AI.** Last year, 25% listed AI among the top-five digital transformation areas content services can enable; this year, 34% placed it in the top-five as decision-makers signal readiness to move from AI consideration to action. About half have already adopted AI at least in a limited fashion to enable their content management strategies. They report interest in using AI to address various content management use cases, including data extraction (45%), autocategorization of documents (42%), obsolete-document identification (41%), and auto-classification of sensitive content (39%), among others. Collectively, these and other use cases can free workers from mundane tasks so they can focus on more important work. Not surprisingly, leaders have been able to extend AI use within their content processes further than their peers.
- › **External vendors/partners.** While leaders are more likely to increase their current investment across several areas (including cloud and AI) over the next 24 months, the investment area with the greatest delta over followers and laggards is for external vendors/partners. As teams look to redefine and strengthen their strategies in the wake of the pandemic, trusted and flexible partners can be valuable to accelerating innovation.<sup>12</sup> Leaders expect more innovation from the content services vendors they choose. They are more likely to value platform features that are differentiating. Such differentiators include business process management, data extraction and capture, blockchain, and robotic process automation (RPA). Leaders rate these capabilities more valuable by over 25 percentage points when compared to laggards.

Figure 8

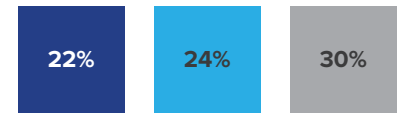
Future-Fit Content Services Strategies Make Use Of Three Key Areas

CLOUD COMPUTING

Primary deployment method today versus primary deployment method expected in two years



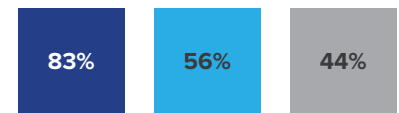
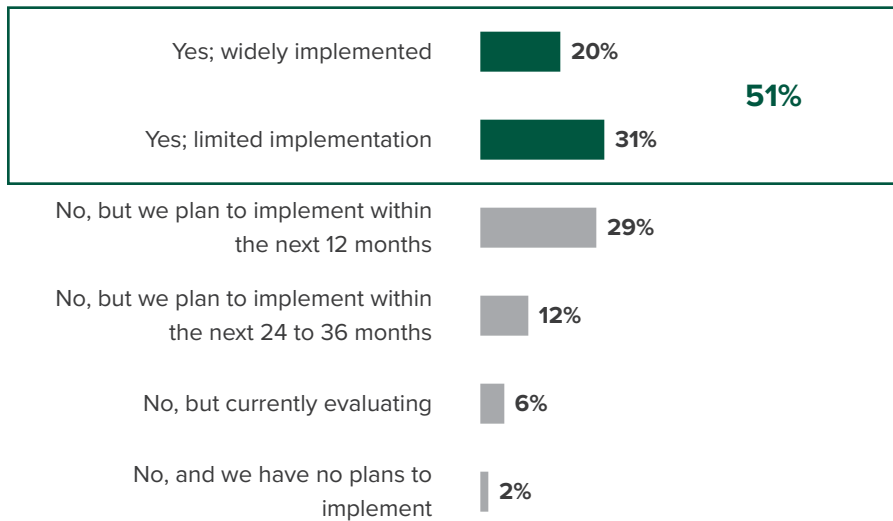
Leaders (N = 54) Followers (N = 76) Laggards (N = 277)



Percent that rely primarily on on-premises deployments for their content management solutions

AI

Are using AI to enable or support their content management strategies

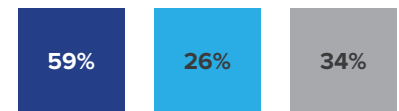


Percent that have implemented AI "widely" or in a "limited" fashion to enable their content management strategy

EXTERNAL VENDORS/PARTNERS

Most important features a content services vendor might provide (Showing features with the greatest deltas between leaders and followers)

- Data extraction and capture
- Metadata or tagging
- Robotic process automation (RPA)
- Blockchain
- Business process management (BPM) and workflow automation
- Electronic forms



Percent increasing their investment in external partners/vendors to innovate on content processes in the next 12 to 24 months

Base: Variable; global content management decision-makers  
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Hyland, December 2020

# Key Recommendations

More than 80% of content management decision-makers report that their organizations have been disrupted by COVID-19. Organizations were compelled to be nimble, change their habits, and find new ways to support their employees as they continued to support and serve customers. Trusted and accessible content was core to this resiliency. Organizations that entered 2020 with strong content services strategies demonstrated leadership in resiliency and capacity for digital transformation.

Forrester's in-depth global survey of content management decision-makers about content services yielded several important recommendations:



**Prepare to ace the next stress test.** Rapid shifts in remote and home office work were nonnegotiable for many organizations. No executive wants to be caught unprepared again. This year must be the year of digital-first acceleration, filling the cracks that COVID and other disruptions exposed. Don't ever let paper become a single point of failure again.



**Accelerate your move to cloud.** Cloud delivery models for content- and process-rich applications make it easier for employees and those trusted external parties to access and engage with essential information. Modern cloud architectures ease secure access to content and are better suited to support mobile apps, and admins can scale up or down as workloads change.



**Plan to support new models of work.** Understand how your organization plans to operate as work styles and business models shift. Expect to see more enterprises keep a higher level of home- or flex-work. Content is an essential input as well as output in many critical business activities — design the apps to equip employees regardless of their location or work hours.



**Embrace digital-first customer engagement.** Content drives many customer-facing processes. Modern content platforms can support apps and use cases that include key external participants, such as customers. Continue to digitize any processes with dependencies on paper or in-person interactions. Collaborate with clients across the content lifecycle and securely share essential documents and decisions.

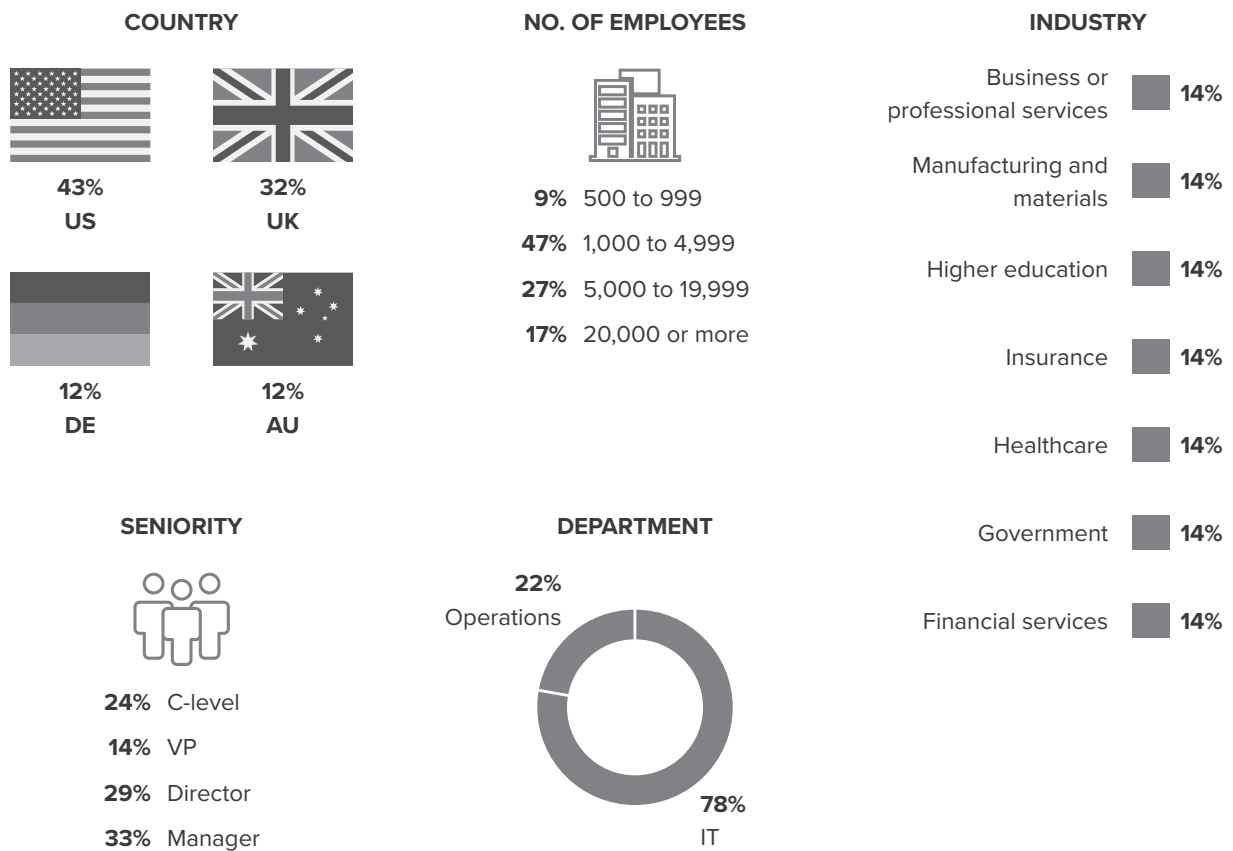


**Allow AI and intelligent content services to do the heavy lifting.** Automation of routine content-centric workloads has been the vision of the content management market for over 20 years. This year may be a breakout one for adoption of AI and other intelligent content services to fast-track categorization, identification of sensitive data, or data extraction. Trainable models and easy-to-use interfaces will make adoption a reality for subject matter experts and information professionals — no longer reserving this innovation for difficult-to-find data scientists and developers.

# Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 407 ECM decision-makers from healthcare, insurance, financial services, higher education, manufacturing, and business/professional services organizations in the US, the UK, Australia, and Germany. Survey participants included decision-makers in IT or operations roles with responsibility for, or influence over, their organizations' content management strategies. Questions provided to the participants asked about their content practices, obstacles to their ability to use content effectively for collaboration and decision-making, and the role modern content services can play in advancing digital transformation, customer, employee, and business resilience goals. Respondents were offered a small incentive as a thank you for time spent on the survey. The survey fielding began in November 2020 and was completed in December 2020. Responses were compared to those given by respondents meeting the same profile in a study conducted one year prior, in order to uncover any meaningful shifts in capabilities, attitudes, and needs. To maintain respondent profile continuity, data comparisons to the prior year omit responses from Germany.

# Appendix B: Demographics



Base: 407 global content management decision makers  
 Note: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Hyland, December 2020

# Appendix C: Supplemental Material

## RELATED FORRESTER RESEARCH

“Five Key Trends That Will Shape Your 2020 Content Services Strategy,” Forrester Research, Inc., May 5, 2020.

“COVID-19 Remote Work Just Broke Your Processes: Here’s What To Do About It,” Forrester Research, Inc., April 23, 2020.

“Your Future Fit Technology Strategy: Adaptive, Creative, and Resilient,” Forrester Research, Inc., October 14, 2020.

“The New, Unstable Normal: How COVID-19 Will Change Business And Technology Forever,” Forrester Research, Inc., July 14, 2020.

## Appendix D: Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Source: “Five Key Trends That Will Shape Your 2020 Content Services Strategy,” Forrester Research, Inc., May 5, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Source: “COVID-19 Remote Work Just Broke Your Processes: Here’s What To Do About It,” Forrester Research, Inc., April 23, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Forrester’s “The New, Unstable Normal: How COVID-19 Will Change Business And Technology Forever,” Forrester Research, Inc., July 14, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Source: “COVID-19 Remote Work Just Broke Your Processes: Here’s What To Do About It,” Forrester Research, Inc., April 23, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Source: “Your Future Fit Technology Strategy: Adaptive, Creative, and Resilient,” Forrester Research, Inc., October 14, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Source: “Five Key Trends That Will Shape Your 2020 Content Services Strategy,” Forrester Research, Inc., May 5, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Source: “Five Key Trends That Will Shape Your 2020 Content Services Strategy,” Forrester Research, Inc., May 5, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> “Improve the employee experience” was even more likely to be a primary objective driving content management strategy in the last year (42% versus 51%), as was “improve the customer experience” (from 41% versus 46%).

<sup>9</sup> Last year, 36% listed CX improvements as a benefit already realized or expected from content services enhancements relative to 41% this year. Last year, 39% listed EX improvements as a benefit already realized or expected from content services enhancements, relative to 47% this year.

<sup>10</sup> Source: “Your Future Fit Technology Strategy: Adaptive, Creative, and Resilient,” Forrester Research, Inc., October 14, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Source: “Five Key Trends That Will Shape Your 2020 Content Services Strategy,” Forrester Research, Inc., May 5, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Source: “Your Future Fit Technology Strategy: Adaptive, Creative, and Resilient,” Forrester Research, Inc., October 14, 2020.